United Nations S/2016/1055

Security Council

Distr.: General
19 December 2016

Original: English

Note verbale dated 14 December 2016 from the Permanent Mission of South Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of South Sudan to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the Security Council and has the honour to forward the speech delivered on 14 December 2016 by the President of the Republic of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, on the commencement of a national dialogue (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of South Sudan to the United Nations should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 14 December 2016 from the Permanent Mission of South Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Speech of the President of the Republic of South Sudan announcing the commencement of national dialogue

Your Excellency, First Vice-President of the Republic,

Your Excellency, Vice-President of the Republic,

Right Honourable Speaker of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly,

Right Honourable Speaker of the Council of States,

Members of this August House,

Members of the diplomatic corps,

Fellow citizens,

I wish to extend my warm greetings to all of you during this festive season. I want to extend special greetings and sympathies to our people in the internally displaced and refugee camps and to all South Sudanese living around the world.

Like all of you, I am deeply concerned about the current direction our country is taking. I am particularly concerned about the recent reports of rising hatred, divisions and tensions, all of which are rapidly eating away at our social fabric.

I am deeply concerned about the parents who can no longer feed their children because of our shrinking economy.

I am also concerned about the growing number of street children and women who have lost everything due to the ongoing political situation. I am deeply concerned that all our citizens are distraught over the current political conflict and drastically declining economy.

In this festive season, I have come before you to share your Government's efforts to end the conflict and to consolidate peace in the country.

As your leaders, we have both a moral and a constitutional responsibility to protect and preserve the unity of our people, end the suffering, restore the economy and refocus on the State and on nation-building.

As you are all aware, our country descended into political crisis in 2013, as a result of an unconventional struggle for power.

The political crisis was immediately followed by extreme violence that shook the foundation of our young republic. As a result of these developments, our country is deeply divided, and the continuing conflict is threatening to tear it apart.

As long as I am your President, I will not allow the suffering of our people to continue, and I will not also allow this country to fall apart.

All my comrades and I fought for this country, not to tear it apart, but to preserve its unity, guarantee its economic viability and ensure enduring freedom and

equality for its people. And so, on this special day, I am calling upon all of you to embrace unity by addressing national unity.

National unity is the means through which we can preserve, protect and restore the integrity of our country. In my view, national unity is a function of dialogue and consensus-building. Unity is the coming together of all our people to work together to develop a vision to guide our country for generations to come.

In pursuit of national unity and reconciliation, your Government has undertaken many efforts in an attempt to bring the conflict to an end and to create a favourable environment in which to reconstitute national consensus. These efforts have resulted in the signing of the Agreement on the Reunification of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which essentially addressed all the issues that created discord within the party.

We have also signed the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, which settled political and military aspects of the conflict. While these agreements have, to a larger extent, addressed many political issues, there remain a number of fundamental issues that require a much broader South Sudanese forum. In particular, our political settlements have often ignored long-standing grass-roots grievances. For example, the SPLM Reunification Agreement and the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict have narrowly addressed the power and military aspects of the conflict.

To link political settlements with grassroots grievances, the next stage, therefore, requires the participation of the broader South Sudanese population, in order to fully restore peace and tranquillity in the country.

As a measure to consolidate peace in our country and to bring our people together, I am initiating the process of national dialogue.

Remember that dialogue has been a hallmark of our liberation struggle. We have always used dialogue as a mechanism to manage our differences and to recommit ourselves to our unity of purpose and our resolve to set our people free. SPLM first entered dialogue with the members of Anya-Nya 2, a process that consolidated the unity of the South Sudanese in their struggle. When the movement split in 1991, we held the first national convention in Chukudum, in 1994, where we recommitted ourselves to our unity as a measure to achieve our liberation objectives.

In 1999, we supported the Wunlit peace initiative between the Nuer and the Jieng communities, a process that served as a forerunner for SPLM unity in 2002 and 2003, when Riek Machar and Lam Akol, respectively, rejoined and were reintegrated into SPLM.

When the movement experienced turbulence in 2004, we convened a high level dialogue in Rumbek, paving the way for the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005. In 2005, we initiated the South-South Dialogue Conference, which culminated in the Juba Declaration, during which the South Sudan Defence Forces, under the leadership of the late General Paulino Matip Nhial, were successfully integrated into the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

Lastly, in 2010, just before the referendum, we held an All-Southern Sudanese Political Parties' Conference, where we agreed to unite our people to end all violence, so as to give them the golden opportunity to vote to determine their destiny.

Evidently, the people of South Sudan have quite an impressive record when it comes to dialoguing, dating as far back as the 1940s. Guided by this rich history, I have no doubt in my mind that, when the people of South Sudan come together to discuss the state of affairs in their country, they can come out united and stronger together. I strongly believe that the current situation in our country calls for a national dialogue. It calls for unity and an end to the cycle of violence and atrocities.

National dialogue, in my view, is both a forum and a process through which the people of South Sudan can gather to redefine the basis of their unity as it relates to nationhood, citizenship and a sense of belonging.

This opportunity allows the people of South Sudan to discuss issues related to the structure of the State, renegotiate the social contract and revitalize their aspirations for development and responsibility in the world of nations.

I take the view that a successful national dialogue can be realized only if and when all the people of South Sudan have broadly participated in, agreed to and accepted its agenda and outcomes.

For this to be realized, the process of national dialogue must be seen as credible, genuine and open to all the people of South Sudan, and it should have reliable guarantees for its outcomes to be accepted and implemented.

To achieve this, I am throwing the full weight of your Government behind it, but the Government will not lead or control this process.

The Government shall be a stakeholder in the national dialogue. I strongly believe in a South Sudanese-led process, and so we have identified our fellow citizens, who are persons of consensus, with stature and integrity, to steer this process.

Your Government will guarantee the safety and freedom of all the actors who are going to participate in the national dialogue, including those who are currently out of the country, some of whom are opposed to the Government.

To ensure the credibility and effectiveness of the national dialogue, your leadership will work very closely with regional, continental and international partners, including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, the African Union, the Troika countries and the United Nations.

As you might be aware, my recent visits to Ethiopia, South Africa and Equatorial Guinea were aimed at mobilizing and seeking regional support for national dialogue.

Similarly, I have also sent a number of special envoys around to mobilize our partners to support the national dialogue.

The national dialogue should have an acceptable agenda and a set of parameters to guide the process. One of the parameters is for all the stakeholders to accept the fact that the national dialogue is placed within the framework of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict.

Doing this is critical, because the Agreement provides the governing framework that guides our actions, and this dialogue should not be seen as a new process. Rather, it should be seen as an expansion of the aforementioned peace agreements to accommodate all the people of South Sudan and their grievances.

The broader objectives of the national dialogue are to end violent conflicts in South Sudan, reconstitute national consensus, save the country from disintegration and usher in a new era of peace, stability and prosperity.

To achieve these goals, the following are the specific objectives of the national dialogue:

- To end all forms of violence in the country
- To redefine and re-establish stronger national unity
- To strengthen the social contract between the citizens and their State
- To address issues of diversity
- To agree on a mechanism for allocating and sharing resources
- To settle historical disputes and sources of conflict among communities
- To set the stage for an integrated and inclusive national development strategy and economic recovery
- To agree on steps and guarantees to ensure safe, free, fair and peaceful elections and post-election transition in 2018
- To agree on a modality for the speedier and safe return of our internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes
- To further national healing, peace and reconciliation

To ensure the integrity and credibility of its outcomes, the national dialogue process shall go through the following steps:

- As your President, I shall personally be the patron of the national dialogue
- A national committee of eminent personalities and persons of consensus will be instituted to steer the process
- The committee will be tasked primarily with developing the agenda for national dialogue and facilitating its process
- The committee will work closely with our experts, resource persons and eminent persons to help in the facilitation of the process, with a secretariat made up of the three nationally based think tanks: the Sudd Institute, the Ebony Centre for Strategic Studies and the Centre for Peace and Development Studies at the University of Juba and assisted by representatives of the Council of Churches and the Islamic Council

- Once the agenda is developed and accepted by the stakeholders, the committee shall issue a schedule or a timetable for the process
- The resolutions of the national dialogue process, once accepted, shall be binding on all the stakeholders

The national dialogue shall undergo three different phases

The first phase shall largely deal with grass-roots consultations. The broader aim of these consultations shall be to map out grievances that are unique to each community and those that are regional or national, in order to deal with these issues at an appropriate level.

The second step is to convene regional peace conferences. These conferences shall bring communities in each region together to discuss and resolve outstanding intercommunal conflicts and pass resolutions, which shall be forwarded to the national conference, as necessary.

The objective of these conferences is to initiate dialogue at the grass-roots level, particularly among the bordering communities, which have unique and localized disputes that should be resolved at that level. At each conference, major issues shall be identified, discussed and resolved, and those resolutions shall be locally and nationally adopted.

The third and final stage is to conv ne the national conference in Juba.

The national conference shall ta kle the remaining issues that are not addressed in the subnational processes, which would have a direct bearing on national cohesion. At this stage, the resolutions adopted at the national conference shall go into different national processes, such as the constitutional, peacemaking, healing and reconciliation processes.

The steering committee of eminent persons shall also recommend additional steps for the national dialogue.

At the end of this exercise, our people shall be more united, and peace will finally return to every corner of our country.

Fellow citizens,

In the light of this national endeavour, I am calling upon all of you to forgive one another, enter into dialogue with one another in your personal capacities, embrace one another and consider yourselves equal citizens of this great country.

In the spirit of national unity, forgiveness and dialogue, I am asking you, the people of South Sudan, to forgive me for any mistakes I might have committed.

This is the spirit that our country needs, and we must act now.

I pledge to all of you fellow citizens that, as the New Year dawns upon us, I will leave no stone unturned in the search for peace, reconciliation and unity in our great country.

I call upon those still carrying arms to stop destroying their own homes and their own country and to join the process of national dialogue.

I also call upon our national army and all the security organs to uphold their constitutional mandate to protect all the citizens and their properties.

I promise that no grievances will be left unaddressed in this process.

We can achieve great things together if we talk and discuss our issues peacefully.

I also call upon those propagating hate speech in social media and in international and local forums to stop tearing their country and their communities apart.

We are bound together as one people, one nation, and we cannot allow our political and social disappointments to destroy our unity.

My Government will take serious measures against those who are found to be broadcasting ethnic hatred and who refuse to renounce violence and join peaceful dialogue.

Finally, fellow citizens, I call upon all of you to stop any propaganda against the international community, especially the American people and the United Nations.

I need to remind you that the international community has always stood by us. Therefore, we cannot turn our own frustrations into hatred against them. As friends, we must work together with them in the spirit of building our nation.

I appeal to the members of the international community, as well, to support the Government, national dialogue efforts and the entire peace implementation process.

We are grateful for the continued humanitarian support and request the resumption of development assistance.

I likewise urge the international community, in the spirit of national dialogue, to also cease any negative propaganda against the people and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan.

My fellow citizens, I want to conclude my call for national dialogue by directing SPLA and SPLA in Opposition to immediately cease hostilities, protect their fellow citizens and prepare the ground for a more peaceful, secure and joyous Christmas and New Year.

I direct all the security forces to support a broad-based national dialogue and to ensure that they provide an enabling environment for this national project.

To you, members of this August House, as you go on recess in your constituencies, I want you to sensitize our citizens to the need to understand and support this national dialogue.

More importantly, my comrades, Taban Deng Gai and James Wani Igga, and I will also do our part in the process of national dialogue.

We will hold peace rallies, starting here in Juba and around the country, to educate and prepare our people for peace and reconciliation.

We will provide any political will needed to make this national dialogue a reality.

I have already directed the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning and his team to mobilize the necessary resources for the national dialogue process.

Fellow citizens, I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a peaceful, prosperous New Year.

May God bless us all and may He bless the Republic of South Sudan.

Thank you all.

(*Signed*) Salva **Kiir Mayardit**
President of the Republic of South Sudan